The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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AT THE DOOR.

"Who's this at the door of heaven that knocks?"
"Let me in. I am orthodox."
"What have you done for God and man
In word or deed since your life began?"
"Why do you ask about my deed?
I have always preached the good old creed,
Stood for Calvin with soul and strength,
Vaunted decrees and hell at length,
Shut the door of heaven on all
Who do not follow the word of Paul,
Ceased not to fast and loudly pray,
Never smiled on the Sabbath day.
'Tis no heretic stands and knocks.
Let me in! I am orthodox!"
"The door you have shut on any man
Will not open for you a span.
Orthodoxy is not its key,
Nor Paul nor Calvin its warders be.
By one who sinned and bitterly wept,
A pardoned sinner, this door is kept.
Such alone can enter in,
Only such to the Master win."

"Who is this at the outer door?"
"One who was ready long before.
Many a year has passed away
Since I entered the holy way,
Many a year no sinful thought
Hath in my chastened spirit wrought.
Spotless and pure to the keenest eye,
Perfect in word and deed, am I."
"Not as man seeth the Maker sees.
The words that answer thy call are these:
'If any man say he hath no sin,
That man lacketh My truth within.'
Here can enter nor liar nor lie:
Heaven is not thy destiny.
Its gate swings wide to the humble soul:
For thee it will never backward roll."

"Who is this?" "Oh, let me in!
Well have I fought with earth and sin.
For heathen tribes I have worked and prayed;
Hither and thither have begged for aid;
Gathered crowds to hear me tell
Of the pagan nations bound for hell;
Journeyed all the country o'er;
Scattered leaves of printed lore;
Loudly preached and fervently prayed.
Surely, my place in heaven is made!"
"Where were the sinners at your side,
When you were wandering far and wide?
What of the humble souls you knew,
Help and comfort who asked from you?
Where is the friend your bitter tongue
Turned to alien, with cruel wrong?
Where is the humble heart you grieved,
That once in your faith and truth believed?
Well you did the greater thing,
Which man could see and your pæan sing.
But the little loves and dues of life,
The healing word for the daily strife,
The cup of water, the gentle deed,
The ready hand for a neighbor's need,—
Where are they? Behold! He saith:
'This is he who denies the faith.
He who provides not for his own,
And turns to his nearest a face of stone,
Worse than an infidel is he.'
Scarce shall the portals part for thee."

"Open the door! Come in I must!
Do you shut your gates upon the just?
Many a year have I professed
To walk the way of heavenly rest;

Sat at the table of the Lord,
Told his story, and read his Word."
"Do not your children shrink with fear
At the snarl from your sneering lips they hear?
Where is the sweet and smiling wife,
Who faded out from her tortured life?
Who looks glad at your welcome face?
Is your home the dwelling of peace and grace?
You, who talk of the better part,
And set your foot on a quivering heart,
Trample on hope and love and trust,
Till dead they lie in the drifting dust,
Taking upon you His name in vain,
Soiling its glory with direst stain,
Go to your place where he was laid,
Who first his Master and Lord betrayed!"

"Hark! Whose summons is this I hear?
Scarce it reaches my listening ear.
Faint and low is the faltering call."
"May I ever come in at all?
I am a sinner; but He came
Along the wayside, and called my name.
Men looked down and passed me by,
Women scorned me with haughty eye:
He alone my misery heard,
Raised me up with a healing word.
I heard, I hear it, o'er and o'er:
'Nor do *I* condemn thee. Go! sin no more!'
I, the outcast of the street,
Washed with my tears His weary feet,
Struggled back to tell his tale
To other souls who falter and fail,
To bring some help and comforting
To the hapless children of my King.
The dust that praises, the grass that grows
Along the highway where He goes,—
Such am I. Oh! may it be
Through the door ajar that His face I see?"
Wide they turned without a sound,
And the silent glory streamed around.
"Penitent sinner! contrite heart!
Come. He gives thee the better part.
Work and faith and humble love
Fashion the soul for its home above.
Priest and Levite pass by no more:
CHRIST hath opened for thee the door!"

—*Rose Terry Cooke.*

If we cannot find God in your house and mine, upon the roadside or the margin of the sea, in the bursting seed or opening flower, in the day-duty and the night-nursing, in the genial laugh and secret grief, in the procession of life ever entering afresh and solemnly passing by and dropping off, I do not think we should discern him any more on the grass of Eden or beneath the moonlight of Gethsemane.—*Martineau.*

LENT—THE PREPARATION OF THE HEART.

"Prepare your hearts unto the Lord."—1 SAM. vii. 3.

The particular preparation of the heart that I want to speak of to-day is that of the season which is called "Lent." Over the greater part of the Christian world, Lent begins to be observed this coming week. All the millions of Eastern Christians in the Greek and Russian and Armenian Churches keep it; and the Roman Catholic Church keeps it very rigidly, as you know. And the great Episcopal Church of England, with its various branches, keeps it,—not so rigidly, indeed, but still as a very special season. And, though we Unitarians have never paid much attention to it, still there is something in it worth thinking of. Especially it is worth thinking of as an opportunity for preparation,—for the preparation of the heart, a little quieting down of life, as it were, when some of the deeper things of life may have a chance with us,—a chance of being thought of and attended to.

You know that the entire disregard of Lent among so many Protestants arises from the old Puritan feeling. I do not wonder at their doing away with it. Like many other things in the old Catholic Church, this whole business of Lent has been overdone, and turned into a wretched form. The religion of the year was very much crowded just into this time. It was a sort of great spring-cleaning for souls and consciences. Just before Lent people crowded in all the eating and drinking and jollification that they could. Then, the day before, they went to confession, got "shrived," or "shrove," as the old word was, whence the name still kept up of "Shrove Tuesday"; and then, on the Wednesday, Lent began, with its fastings and cessation of all the pleasure-side of life. On the first day of Lent, as a great token of humiliation, ashes were strewed upon the heads of the people when they went to mass, or, as it was sometimes done, ashes sprinkled with holy water were taken, and with them the priest made the mark of the cross on the forehead of each worshipper, saying to each as he did so, "Remember that thou art dust, and to dust must return." That

is why the first day of Lent is still called "Ash Wednesday." And then came forty days of fasting,—no parties, no festivities, no weddings, only certain of what were thought the poorest kinds of food to be eaten, and life given up as much as possible to penances, prayers, and services. It was all made so artificial, so forced, that I do not wonder that the Puritans threw it all overboard, would have none of it. And still, in this as in many other things, they went too far.

The old idea out of which all those formal extravagances had grown was, after all, a good idea and a true idea. It was simply this,—the value of a season of thoughtful heart-preparation, the value of a change in life's busy whirl, the value of a slack time in the eager excitement and race of the world. Never mind how this particular season came to be chosen. As a fact, if you go back far enough, it had a reasonable enough origin. It was the commemoration of the forty days in the wilderness. We are apt to call that "the temptation in the wilderness"; but that was not the essence of it. It was really the "preparation" in the wilderness. What Christ went away for into the wild hill-country, all alone, was simply to prepare his heart, fully and clearly, for the great work to which he had felt the spirit of God calling him. He did not go there to fast, and he did not go to be tempted: he went to face this great work he had to do. He went to be alone with God, to pray, to think, to settle his heart. He fasted because out there in the wilderness there would be nothing to eat but a few roots and berries, only just enough to keep the bare life in him. But the fasting was no help to his soul,—just the other way; for the first great temptation which came upon him there came exactly from that fasting, from the gnawing hunger it brought on,—the temptation to try whether, if he were indeed called to the Messiahship, God would not at his word turn the very stones into bread for him. But all those temptations and the fasting were incidental. The real meaning of that time was simply that, with that tremendous work before him, he wanted a breathing space of thought and prayer, a few weeks of earnest, devout preparation.

There,—that is what started the idea of Lent. Men said, "If the very Saviour, the very highest and holiest, wanted a season of preparation, do not we want something of that kind?" They always loved to piece their memories of Christ on to their days and seasons. To the most joyous festival of the year, just when the sun seemed turning back to earth after the shortest day, they put the festival of Christ's birth,—Christmas. And then, in a little while, when the days were lengthening for the spring, when the year's busy work was coming on to its full, they put the commemoration of Christ's time of preparation in the wilderness. The very word "Lent" comes from an old Saxon word *lencten*, to "lengthen,"—spring was the lengthening" season,—and so the religious preparation of that lengthening springtime came to be called "Lent." But the idea simply was, "Here, while the year is growing to its fullest length and busiest toil, let us pause a moment, and remember how our Christ went away into the wilderness to prepare for his great year; and, though we cannot go away into the wilderness, we can have the best part of the wilderness anywhere, if we will: we can have its quietness, we can have its prayers, we can have its preparation of our hearts"; and they added, "We can have its fasting."

Well, leaving out the fasting,—which, as I have said, was not what Christ went into the wilderness for, and was not any help, but rather the other way,—but leaving that out, was not the rest of the idea good, not only good, but very good? Say what you will about the glory of the world, and the nobleness of the world's busy work, and the innocence and delight of the world's eager pleasures! I know. But that is not all. There is another side to you and me besides that which faces to the world or which either work or pleasure can fill. There is that side in us which faces toward God and duty and the higher life and the great silent beyond. You may try to leave that out;—but it won't be left out! It comes back in quiet hours; it comes back when you are sick; it comes back when you are downhearted and discouraged; and you *have* to think of it! What we all want, indeed, is to give that deeper side a little more place all the time. Of course, that is the best. Have your "preparation" every day! There

should not be a single day,—if you want to live strongly and well,—not a single day when you do not prepare yourself. You want to prepare for every day by some quiet moments of prayer, some earnest purpose of duty, some deliberate thought of God, and of doing God's will. And perhaps, if we were angels, that would be enough,—some quiet little preparing of the heart each day. But, being poor, weak men and women, we need something more. We need any chance that the year brings of some longer pause, some more careful and deliberate looking into the deeper things. And, therefore, though I don't put Lent as any sacred obligation, yet, it having come down to us, I cannot help being glad of it. It is here,—this slackening a little of the eager hurry, of pleasure and worldliness, at any rate; and so I would have us use it.

Of course there is nothing binding in it, nothing obligatory: there is no rigid line to be drawn of what should be done or what should not. It is just an opportunity,—and an opportunity for that side of our life which during the rest of the year is so apt to be crowded out. It is an opportunity for a little less hurried life; and, if you are wise, you will join in with *that* opportunity, and not try to ridicule or thwart it. It is an opportunity when the thoughts of many people are a little more given to religion and to religious services; and, if you are wise, you will join in with that also. All things are only helps; but God knows we all need helping. And it may be that, among these hymns and prayers and services and quiet thoughts to which Lent invites us, there may be for you and me the upward steps toward something of a clearer faith, a firmer strength, a nobler and more Christian life.— *Brooke Herford.*

THE STILL HOUR.

WAIT ON THE LORD.

"They who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength."

Young souls, so strong the race to run,
  And win each height sublime,
Unweary still would ye march on,
  And still exulting climb?

Walk with the Lord. Along the road
  Your strength he will renew.
Wait on the everlasting God,
  And he will wait on you.

Burn with his love. Your fading fire
  An endless flame will glow:
Life from the Well of Life require,—
  The stream will ever flow.

Ye shall not faint, ye shall not fail,
  Still in the Spirit strong:
Each task divine ye still shall hail,
  And blend the exulting song.

Aspiring eyes ye still shall raise,
  And heights sublime explore:
Like eagles, ye shall sunward gaze;
  Like eagles, heavenward soar.

Your wondrous portion shall be this,
  Your life below, above:
Eternal youth, eternal bliss,
  And everlasting love.

— *Thomas Hornblower Gill.*

Fortunate, thrice fortunate, are those who can believe in an infinite presence of perfect love, around them, above them, and within their very soul. Blessed, thrice blessed, are those who have learned by experience that there is always an answer to every sincere prayer,—an answer which comes, perhaps, by some divine law, not necessarily in outward events, but in inward strength, knowledge and peace. Blessed are those to whom this vast universe is not a dreary desert, but the house of a heavenly Father, in which are many mansions, suitable to all the needs of all his children. Blessed are those who, while they believe in universal, unchanging law, see in this majestic order of Nature an endless adaptation to the wants of all, and whose hearts tend upward to God by a steady outflow of trust, hope, and love. This is the prayer of faith which is never without an answer.

When one, who has all his life prayed only the prayer of form, at last opens his real soul to God, the spirits in heaven may say to each other with joy, "Behold! he prayeth." When the worldly man, hardened in outward routine, is moved by some deep experience to pray, there may be joy in the presence of the angels of God. When the good man, who has tried hard to do his duty, but only in his own strength, feels the need of some higher help, then it may add something even to the joy of

heaven. And this prayer may be answered, as Paul's prayer was answered. The Lord answered Paul's prayer by sending Ananias to him to comfort and teach him. Some blessed human sympathy may be the answer which God sends to our prayer,—some kindly human love, some unexpected word of human counsel. When we are moved, we know not why, to say a word of encouragement or do some good action, perhaps the Lord is making us his mediator to answer the secret prayer of one of our human brethren. Let us, then, not resist such influences, but be willing to be led by the spirit of God, to become his agents for good in the world.—*James Freeman Clarke, in "Messages of Faith, Hope, and Love."*

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[*Send all matter for this department, including all offers and all requests, to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 3 Webster Street, Allston, Mass.*]

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in Training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty," address Miss Langmaid, 2 Gordon Terrace, Brookline, Mass.?

The following books are offered by the Cambridge Branch. Address Mrs. C. W. Kettell, 19 Brewster Street, Cambridge, Mass. Old correspondents will please address the members to whom they have formerly written. In order to receive books from the Cambridge Branch, it will be necessary henceforth to send a reference with the *first* request.

Educational.

Franklin's "Primary Arithmetic"; Colburn's "First Lessons"; "Second Lessons in Arithmetic"; Franklin's "Written Arithmetic"; Franklin's "Fourth Reader"; Worcester's "Fourth Book"; Appleton's "Introductory Fourth Reader"; Worcester's "Pronouncing Spelling-book"; "First Lessons in English," Welsh; Swinton's "New Language Lessons"; Longman's "School Composition"; "English Literature," Reed; "The Literary Reader," Cathcart; "Preparatory Greek Course in English," Wilkinson; "College Greek Course in English"; "Preparatory Latin Course in English"; "Our World": "First lessons in Geography"; "Grammar-school Geography," Swinton; "Book-keeping," Bryant and Stratton; Merivale's "General History of Rome"; "The Student's Gibbon"; "The Student's History of France"; Hallam's "Middle Ages"; "French Revolution of 1848," Lamartine; Bloss's "Ancient History"; Sheldon's "General History"; Hallam's "Constitutional History of England"; Sheppard's "Constitutional Text-book"; "Study of Political Economy," Laughlin.

Miscellaneous.

"Evangeline"; "Sandford and Merton"; "Good Words for the Young"; "A Book about Doctors"; "Illustrated Hydropathic Encyclopædia"; "The Lost Inca"; "The Banishment of Jessop Blythe," Joseph Hatton.

The following books are offered by the First Church Alliance of Salem. Address Miss Alice D. Perkins, 5 Oliver street, Salem, Mass. "A Class-book of Chemistry," Gammons; "Manual of Inorganic Chemistry," Eliot and Storer; "Philosophy of Natural History," Smellie; "Elements of Surveying and Navigation," Davies; Gray's "Lessons in Botany"; Arnold's "First Latin Book"; "Handbook for Beginners in Latin," White; Andrews's "First Latin Book"; Andrews and Stoddard's "Latin Grammar"; Harkness's "Latin Grammar"; "Phonographic Class-book"; "Class-book of Etymology," Lynd; Sherwin's "Common School Algebra"; Whitney's "German Grammar"; "Inventional Geometry," Spencer; "Elements of Geometry," Spencer; "First Book of American History," Eggleston; "Beginner's American History," Montgomery; "Story of our Country," Monroe; Harper's "Third Reader"; Lippincott's "Third Reader"; Franklin's "Third Reader"; "Gospel Hymns and Songs," Bliss and Sankey; "Gospel Hymns No. 3, No. 4"; "Pentecostal Hymns;" *Harper's Magazine* for 1877, 1886; "Health Lessons for Beginners."

The following books are offered by the Women's Alliance, Second Church, Salem, Mass. Address Miss L. Adele Decker, 4 Mt. Vernon Street, Salem, Mass. "Life and Letters of Catharine M. Sedgwick"; "Apple Blossoms," Goodale; "Sermons out of Church," Miss Mulock; "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," Ian Maclaren; "The

Freaks of Lady Fortune," May Crommelin; "A Study in Temptations," John Oliver Hobbs; "Russian Portraits," Melchior de Vogise; "Darkest England," Gen. Booth; "Memoir of William H. Channing," O. B. Frothingham; "Josephus" (5 vols.); "In Distance and in Dream," M. E. Sweetser; "The Struggle for Immortality," Elizabeth Stuart Phelps; Smith's "Geography," 1839; "Adams's Arithmetic," 1838; "The Philosophy of Natural History"; "The Standard Third Reader"; "A Grammar of Composition"; "Treatise on Punctuation"; "Our Legacy"; *McClure's Magazine*, 1896, 1897; the *Unitarian*, 1896, 1895, and 1894; *Harper's Magazine*, 1876; *Ladies' World*, 1891, 1894, and 1896; also odd numbers of *Munsey*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Youth's Companion*.

Current numbers of the *Spectator* are offered by Miss A. M. Storer, 476 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.

Mrs. W. L. Wood, 81 Cottage Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, offers "Midshipman Easy"; "Our Mutual Friend"; "Martin Chuzzlewit"; "Practical Lessons in the Use of English," Hyde; Anderson's "General History"; "Spiritual Athlete"; "Mind and Words of Jesus," Macduff; "Household Cyclopædia of Practical Receipts and Daily Wants," Alex. Hamilton.

Rev. C. F. Dykeman, Ashton, Minnesota, offers to any one paying postage, "But Yet a Woman," Hardy; "Two Years before the Mast," Dana; also odd numbers of *Atlantic Monthly*.

I offer the *Woman's Journal* (not *Ladies'*) for 1898 to any one who may like it. Have several months' back numbers on hand. Mrs. William F. Heald, Pepperell, Mass.

REQUESTS.

Libraries.

Standing requests for libraries from: —

Mrs. O. A. Langston, Sidney, Comanche County, Texas;

Mrs. C. S. Stowell, Magnolia, Boulder County, Colorado;

Mr. Davis M'Carn, Anamosa, Iowa;

Mrs. D. Jayne, Jamestown, Chautauqua County, New York;

Mrs. Emma Miner, Lisbon, New Hampshire;

Stephen D. Rhoden, La Pine, Crenshaw County, Alabama;

Mrs. Isadore E. Rice, Oakland, Oregon.

Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.) 6. Do not send matter for the Book Club to Miss Clarke, but to Mrs. Nichols, the Book Club secretary.

I am a minister of the gospel, and now reside in Florida. If you could send me any religious journals, as the *Christian Register*, *Outlook*, or any magazines, as *Harper's*, *Century*, etc., I would see that they are distributed among families who love such reading, yet are not able to pay for them. Anything in this line I can do will be cheerfully done by Rev. S. G. Davis, Limona, Florida.

I wonder if all the readers enjoy the "Bible Class" as much as I do. I enjoy all The *Cheerful Letters*, but especially the "Bible Class." The good reading I have received has filled a great want in my life. I would be very glad of any of Ian Maclaren's books except "The Bonnie Brier Bush." I would like George MacDonald's books to read and to loan, especially those which contain the liberal gospel. Mrs. Emma M. Backus, Grovetown, Columbia County, Georgia.

I would be very thankful to receive any kind of reading matter, for old or young. Miss Mamie Gardner, Eldorado, Greer County, Oklahoma.

Programmes of Boston Symphony Orchestra and Grove's Dictionary of Music, also Blackstone law books, are asked for by Mrs. J. B. Kline, 1618 West 6th Avenue, Topeka, Kansas.

Dear Cheerful Letter,—I have had some trouble in getting my mail, as there is a young lady in this town who has my name; and often the postmaster does not notice the Mrs. So I will sign my name differently after this, using my husband's initials, and would like to request all who write to me to address me as below instead of Mrs. Carrie

Smith. I have found so many who are anxious for reading. I can hardly find time to read over the papers sent to me, until some one comes for them; and I have books loaned out all the time. I am so glad I have reading matter to lend in this Far Western country. The people are just as industrious and intelligent here as farther east; but there is a scarcity of books and papers, owing to hard times. I have not received any of the books I asked for in the December *Cheerful Letter;* but I suppose every one was too busy preparing for Christmas, and had not the time to send any, if they had them. Christmas at our house this year reminded me of one of Mr. Wolf's pictures in the *Ladies' Home Journal* where it is "Christmas only in name." Our children hung up their stockings, but they found nothing in them. We could not possibly afford them even the smallest present, as our moving expenses were so great, and we have gone in debt for a farm. So we had no money to spare for anything. They had a small treat at their Sunday-school, and I promised to try and get each one a birthday present this year. Mrs. W. C. Smith, Chase, Kansas, Box 156.

Mrs. Julia J. Rowland, Florian, North Carolina, asks for a spelling-book and dictionary.

Miss M. A. Dikeman, Barnes, Washington County, Kansas, asks for "Æsop's Fables." Miss Dikeman will pay postage.

Lillian E. Hundley, Colesville, Virginia, sixteen years of age, asks for a grammar, geography, and history of United States.

Pearl Smith, Rella, North Carolina, thirteen years old, asks for reading for herself and little brother.

Will some one send *Ladies' Home Journal* to Mrs. Maud Wheeler, Tom Bean, Texas, also to Mrs. Lizzie Radcliffe, 8th and Boundary Streets, Olympia, Washington?

The address of Mrs. J. F. Boling is now Fresno, California, the post-office at Garfield having been discontinued.

Mrs. A. C. Earl, Marengo, Ohio, would be pleased to receive "Sant' Ilario," by Marion Crawford.

Mrs. Guy Whitten, Clinton, Maine, asks for a paper called *Sabbath Reading.*

AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

[*Please send all material for this department to Miss E. D. Chapman, 34 Buckingham Street, Cambridge, Mass.*]

HISTORICAL GAME.

This game can be played by a small number of people. One person goes out of the room, and an historical character is thought of by those left behind, whose name contains as many letters as there are people in the room. Each person chooses a letter, and thinks to himself of some character in history whose name begins with that letter. When all is ready, the person who has been outside is called in, and, beginning at the head of the line, asks questions about the character decided upon. In turn, he questions each person until he has guessed the separate historical people, when the whole name will then be known.

Example. Principal historical character, *Milton.* Different names taken,— Moses, Isaac, Lincoln, Tell, Ovid, and Newton.

ARITHMETICAL PUZZLE.

My first is twice my fifth. My second and fourth are equal, and are each one-fifth of my third. My third is one-tenth of my fifth. My second and third are two less than my third and fourth. The sum of my parts is 157. I am well-bred, and relate to the community.

ENIGMA.

1.

I am a Bible character without a name,
Whose body to corruption never came,
Who died a death was never known before,
Part of whose shroud is in each household store.

2.

I went to the woods and got it, and, because I got it, I looked for it, and, because I could not find it, I brought it away in my hand. What was it?

DROP LETTER PUZZLE.

1. Drop a letter from an elevation, and leave a number.
2. Drop a letter from a fruit, and leave a vegetable.

3. Drop a letter from to make, and leave a receptacle for fruit.
4. Drop a letter from to sing, and leave to converse.
5. Drop a letter from to fondle, and leave responsibilities.
6. Drop a letter from to mount, and leave the thing mounted.
7. Drop a letter from an article of dress, and leave a little god.

Answers to puzzles in the January number: —

A DESCRIPTION OF ANN.

1. Animated. 2. Announce. 3. Annunciate. 4. Antagonistic. 5. Antecedents. 6. Antiquity. 7. Anthem. 8. Anodyne. 9. Anarchist. 10. Anagram. 11. Antidote.

CHARADES.

1. Ramrod. 2. Earnest. 3. Horsemanship.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

[*Articles for this department should be sent to Mrs. J. S. Howe, Chestnut Street, Brookline.*]

BANTERING BABIES.

Is not the bantering that our children have to bear responsible for a good deal of their pertness and self-consciousness?

"Well, Susie, how do you like Uncle Tom's looks?" calls the jolly stranger at the foot of the stairs to the timid little maid who is venturing slowly down, gaze all intent. The assembled family listens for the mite's reply. "You haven't got very much hair on your head, have you?" says Susie, slowly, and is hurried back upstairs in disgrace or welcomed down with laughter and applause, according as Uncle Tom is or is not sensitive about his baldness.

But was the fault really with Susie or with Uncle Tom? What ought Susie to have said? What would an older person have said in the same circumstances? "An older person would never have been in the same circumstances?" Of course not. That is the very point. We are constantly placing children in situations so awkward and embarrassing that they could not possibly occur to an older person, and then entertaining ourselves with their poor little attempts at escape.

"What do you think of this grandma, Susie?" says the grandmother. Susie promptly answers, "I think you're a funny old lady"; and straightway grandma is rebuffed and hurt, and mamma disappointed and grieved. But what was to be expected? If Susie had been a thorough woman of the world, she might have said, "I think you're my dear mamma's dear mamma." But what child would be equal to constructing a reply like that? We do not look for Madame de Staëls in our nurseries.

It is not visitors only who provoke the children to these unpleasant and pert displays of candor. Fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, do not realize how much of their daily talk is of this jesting, teasing sort. "Poor Susie, don't you wish you had some one to love you?" says mamma to the household pet. And Susie, casting an anxious glance up and seeing the pride and affection in the eyes looking into hers, retorts straightway, "Nonsense!" Then forthwith mamma must explain to her that "nonsense" isn't a nice word for little girls to use to their mothers.

Children are at a double disadvantage in respect to repartee. Not only do they lack the wit, but the words. I doubt whether enough allowance is ever made in dealing with young children—or in dealing with imperfectly educated older people, for that matter—for the limitations of their vocabulary. What is often called impertinence in children often results from mental, not moral, delinquency.

I wish you wouldn't be so cross to me, mamma," wails Susie, and is told that it is naughty to call mamma "cross."

What she really means is, "Do you not think, mamma, that you may be rebuking me with undue severity for what is perhaps after all only a trifling, because unpremeditated, offence?" But the poor little soul doesn't know how to say all that. It often happens, I am sure, that children are cut short in explanation or exposulation that is perfectly justifiable in its spirit simply because they lack the words that would express it fittingly.

And for that play of wit which we call banter the command of a full vocabulary is indispensable. Who of us grown folk cannot

call to mind some acquaintance of quicker faculties and cleverer speech than ours with whom we are embarrassed and ill at ease, merely because he delights in repartee, and we cannot meet him on equal terms at it? The feeling that we have in his company—if we stop to analyze it—is that same miserable self-consciousness that our poor, puzzled babies suffer every day, almost every hour, of their little lives. We ought to be more careful, more tender with them. We ought to interpose to save them from their embarrassment, instead of diverting ourselves with the sight of it. If we are not wise and tactful enough for that, it will be our fault, not theirs, if they defend themselves with the pert candor which is really the only weapon at their command.—*Outlook.*

NATURAL HISTORY.

NOTES ON CLAM-SHELLS.

This article might with propriety be called "The Confessions of an Unobservant Naturalist," and is, in fact, the sequel to the story of "Sea Snails" in the November number.

I was wandering over Revere Beach one day, and wishing that there were more variety in the shells lying about upon the sand. Each pair of small white shells which I picked up seemed to me but the young of the common soft-shelled clam, or *Mya arenaria*, also called "Sand Clam."

Suddenly the doubt presented itself as to whether a species could have young that varied so in shape, when they were about the same size and apparently about the same age. I looked them over, and picked out a series, varying in size, but all of exactly the same shape as the adult clam, and having the curious little projecting shelf or process, at the hinge of the left valve, which serves for the reception of the internal cartilage (the object of which we shall learn later) and which is characteristic of this clam.

I then sorted out all my white bivalves according to shape, without regard to size, and found I had six piles of several shells each, and four of only one or two shells each. Among the abundant species were the "gem," the "thin tellen," the "surf clam," the "Macoma," the "rock-borer," and the "Petricola," which latter, however, does not look much like a Mya, being slender in shape and fluted at one end.

Among the more rare white bivalves was the dainty Lyonsia, fragile and pearly; and the Pandora, also pearly, whose two halves fit so closely, that you wonder if there is any room for the animal between them; and the Cochlodesma, more closely than all the others, simulating a real clam; and the brittle Thracia, which my reference book calls "a large and interesting shell, easily distinguished from most of our shells by its toothless hinge; and, when the valves happen to be found united, their disparity in size and convexity is at once perceived. When the external coating is removed, we come to a silvery substance, like mother-of-pearl." But, though single valves appear to have been found abundantly along the coast, including Rhode Island and Maine, I have only one perfect pair, found on Revere beach after a severe storm. And it is curious that my single valves are all the right one (if I may trust my mental picture of a nest of them, now packed away in a box).

The above account of Thracia, copied from Gould and Binney's "Invertebrates of Massachusetts," is printed by way of atonement for my having at first considered the shell but an enlarged and distorted clam-shell. Single valves of the shell, with specimens of other shells mentioned in this article, are offered to those who have a "true interest" in shells, and do not merely care for those pretty to look at. But I must warn such persons that my shells have not been unpacked since we moved, and it may be two months or so before I can put up any collections. This will also explain why some of the requests for "sea snails" have received no notice. All the boxes already packed were sent off before some of the later requests were received, and I have had no time to give to shells since.

Every one who has a collection of shells wishes for a book describing the different kinds, from which she can get names for her own, and learn interesting items about the distribution of the species and the habits of the animals. Unfortunately, a book to describe all the shells there are in the world, or even all the common shells, would be too large and expensive for most of us to afford. One can sometimes find interesting accounts

of the best known species in some encyclopædia or in a manual of zoölogy. The "Standard Natural History," published by Cassino in 1885, has in Vol. I. some beautiful figures and interesting descriptions of mollusks. Dwellers in New England will find most of the shells occurring on that coast described in a beautiful but rare book, "The Invertebrates of Massachusetts," by Gould and Binney; for Connecticut shells extend to the southern parts of Massachusetts, and Maine shells to the northern parts. Emerton's "Life on the Seashore" and Heilprin's "Animal Life of our Seashore" have a few pictures of shells, Heilprin's work relating more especially to those of the New Jersey coast. He figures about thirty species of bivalve shells; and I think his little book costs about a dollar, more or less. It is published by Lippincott. One of the Reports of the United States Fish Commission (1871–72) has a report by Prof. Verrill on the "Invertebrates of Vineyard Sound," with many fine drawings of shells, crabs, etc. One of the shilling English books, by Rev. J. G. Wood, on "Common Shells of the Seashore," can sometimes be bought on this side of the water for forty or fifty cents. Some English shells are the same as our own species, and some interesting accounts of the habits of the animals are given. I hear rumors of a book on the Shells of California, or of the West Coast; but I have not been able to procure it, and am inclined to doubt its existence.

Woodward's "Manual of the Mollusca" costs about three dollars, and describes and figures shells from all parts of the world. It is an old standard work. The Lamellibranchs, or bivalves, are there called Conchifera. They have also been called Acephala, or headless animals. "The valves of the Conchifera are bound together by an elastic ligament, and articulated by a hinge furnished with interlocking teeth. The shell is closed by powerful adductor muscles, but opens spontaneously by the action of the ligament when the animal relaxes and after it is dead."

It is easy to understand the action of the external ligament, which is attached to the tops of the valves, and by its contraction pulls them apart. The internal ligament, or cartilage, is placed between two portions of the shell, at the hinge area, and is strongly compressed when the valves are closed, its expansion forcing the valves apart when the adductor muscles relax. The "shelves" on the hinge area of the "surf clam" (Mactra) are for the reception of this cartilage, the remains of which are often to be seen in the dead shell. Try to soak it out, and see if it regains its elasticity, or replace it by a cube of elastic India rubber, and study its action by forcibly compressing it between the valves of the shell and then letting it expand.

The apex of a shell is the point from which the growth of the valves commences, and is termed the beak, or umbo. The beaks are near the hinge, because that side grows less rapidly. Trace the lines of growth around the shell. "While the edge of the mantle deposits the successive layers which increase the size of the shell, the entire surface of the mantle deposits the pearly substance which lines the inner surface of the shells."

The relation of the shell to the animal may be readily determined in most instances by the direction of the beaks, which usually point forward, while the ligament is always posterior, and both are on the back or dorsal side of the shell.

Bivalves are all more or less inequilateral, the anterior being usually much shorter than the posterior side. That is, if you suppose yourself to cut across the pair of shells at the beaks, the front part will be much shorter than the back part; and the shape of the shell border is often different. The Scallop (Pecten) has a small notch in the front part of its right valve at the top. Look for this notch in your scallop shells. In an oyster shell the position of the animal is shown by the scar of the large muscle, which is always posterior. An oyster lies down upon its left side; and this valve becomes the largest and thickest, the thin upper, or right, valve often fitting into it like a lid. This is where the oyster is not distorted and squeezed in a thick cluster of other oysters.

One often finds a thin, smooth, rounded shell growing upon oysters or scallops. It has a flat under valve with a hole in it, and a convex upper valve. It is called *Anomia glabra*, jingle shell, or gold and silver shell; and, after the animal is dead, the upper valves are often washed in upon the beach

in great numbers. A very small white Anomia grows upon the roots of seaweed. These also show the hole in the lower valve. Although in the adult animal this hole is at the beak of the shell, a study of the development showed that it began in the margin. The animal was attached by a byssus, or cord of silk threads. This made a notch in the border of the baby shell, then the new borders of shell were laid down around it, finally closing beyond the byssus, and growing beyond it, so that in the adult the hole is at the beak of the shell; and no one would guess that it began as a notch in its border. Anomias have no hinge teeth, and the valves separate very easily. They form one of the most marked exceptions to the rule that among bivalves the right and left valve are usually alike.

We must now consider the internal markings of bivalve shells; and then, if there is space, we will describe a few of the more interesting families, or species. (If not, these descriptions can go into other numbers of *The Cheerful Letter*.) Place a number of half-shells in front of you, saucer-side up: note the round, smooth, polished spots, one at each end of the shell, which were the places of attachment of the large muscles that close the shell. Then note that a line of enamel runs from one to the other at a little distance from the edge of the shell. This is called the "pallial line," or "mantle line," because it indicates where the mantle is attached to the shell. The mantle is a soft membrane lining both valves of the shell, "just as the blank pages line the inside of a book cover."

Now in those shells that have a well-marked pallial line, follow it with your eye around from the forward muscle scar to the rearward muscle scar. In some shells you will find this line continuous or "entire": in others it turns suddenly back, and makes an acute notch, or "sinus." The presence of a "sinus" tells us that the animal had two long but retractible muscular tubes, or siphons, at the posterior end of its body. The common or soft clam has a well-marked sinus. It lies buried in the mud; and its long tubes reach up to the clear sea water, thus supplying the gills with oxygen and the mouth with the tiny particles which serve as food. The mouths of these mollusks are inconspicuous, very different from those of gasteropods, with their file-like tooth ribbons.

One day I was conchologizing on Revere Beach, after the time that I had discovered that all white bivalves are not common clams, when I picked up a large, heavy, rounded shell, which I took for granted was a quahog, or "round clam," which is found scantily in Massachusetts Bay, according to the books, and, idly glancing at the pallial line, I discovered to my amazement that it was entire! This quite upset my quahog theory, for *Venus mercenaria* has a deeply indented mantle line. I also found that it lacked the lunule, a curious little impression just in front of the beaks of Venus and some other shells. Its epidermis was brown, and the absence of the internal purple spot almost universal in quahogs ought alone to have suggested doubts to my mind as to the correctness of my diagnosis. In fact, it was the *Cyprina Islandica*, or Iceland Cyprina, a shell not uncommon on northern beaches. My humiliation at confounding these two shells was somewhat assuaged when I found that no less a naturalist than Pennant had made the same mistake.

C. H. Clarke.

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(To be continued.)

In what light we should see the character of God if the fall of the body is really the fall of the soul, remembering that he has put into the hearts of most men, by intuition or providential suggestion, a divine hope of something future. Were this possible, . . . every good man might feel an infinite pity for his kind, diviner far than the very providence of heaven.

"The Bible Class" is necessarily omitted this month.

To Tom W. Clark, Young Harris, Georgia; Maggie Bond, Nocono, Montague County, Texas; Mrs. E. H. Robinson, Walton Furnace, Virginia; Mrs. Mary A. Smith, Box 22, Washington, Louisiana; Mrs. Nellie H. Wigglesworth, Vulcan, Orange County, Virginia; Mrs. M. M. Butter, Rye, Arizona; Miss L. N. Campbell, Vulcan, Orange County, Virginia,—your notes and requests cannot be printed for another month, because sent to the Editor instead of to the Book Club Secretary.

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

WE ARE VERY ANXIOUS TO INCREASE OUR SUBSCRIPTION LIST, AND THEREFORE ASK OUR FRIENDS IF EACH WILL TRY TO GET US ONE NEW SUBSCRIBER THIS YEAR.

2,000 SUBSCRIBERS WOULD PUT OUR PAPER ON A GOOD FINANCIAL BASIS, AND ENABLE US TO DO BETTER WORK. THOSE NOT WISHING THE PAPER SENT TO THEM CAN HAVE IT SENT DIRECT FROM THE OFFICE TO A "SHUT-IN."

There will be a meeting of the Cheerful Letter Exchange on the first Friday in March at 10.30 A.M. at 25 Beacon Street, Boston. All interested in this work are cordially invited to be present.

We fear that some of our subscribers have the impression that by subscribing for *The Cheerful Letter* they will be sure to receive books. The Book Club has proved an attractive department of our paper; and many of our subscribers are interested in sending books to those who are unable otherwise to obtain them. But we engage only to keep the Book Club open for offers and requests, and that under certain conditions.

We remind all who send parcels or boxes with books, papers, etc., to correspondents or to libraries, that it is absolutely necessary to write at the same time to the receiver, enclosing the receipt which shows that the express or freight charges on the package have been paid. For want of this precaution, valuable packages have never been received. It is not probable that any of our *Cheerful Letter* friends send packages without prepaying them, but it is a common mistake of the express agents to charge the receiver for a prepaid package.

N.B.—PLEASE READ DIRECTIONS AT BEGINNING OF BOOK CLUB BEFORE WRITING FOR BOOKS.

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